

INCREASE LIMIT OF COST OF PUBLIC BUILDING AT DECATUR, ALA.

JANUARY 28, 1925.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the
state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. ELLIOTT, from the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 374]

The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, to which was referred the bill (H. R. 374) to increase the limit of cost of public building at Decatur, Ala., having duly considered the same, hereby make report of it to the House and with the recommendation that the bill do pass.

The act of March 4, 1913, authorized the acquisition of a site and the erection of a building at Decatur, Ala., at a limit of cost of \$65,000, and a site was acquired for \$6,500; this left approximately \$50,000 available for the building after proper deductions had been made for lock boxes, lamp standards, vault shelving, lobby desks, etc., and contingencies.

Plans were prepared for a two-story building, and the amount available was sufficient to construct a building as designed. Proposals were in fact obtained and a contract was about to be awarded, when, because of war conditions, the Treasury Department suspended the letting of new contracts for the construction of Federal buildings. When after the armistice the restrictions against letting contracts were removed, it was found upon receiving new bids that the war-time prices had advanced to such an extent that the building at Decatur could not be constructed as designed.

The situation was carefully considered by the department with the Member of Congress from the district and with the local committee who came to Washington for the purpose. It was finally decided to revise the plans for the building so as to provide for a one-story structure so designed that if an increase in the limit of cost was provided by Congress before the building was ready to receive the roof, an additional story could be added. It was set forth that in the absence of such legislation the only manner in which the building could be constructed according to the original plans—i. e., having

two stories—would be for the contractor to submit a proposal in which he would agree to construct the building according to the original plans for such sum as would remain from the appropriation after deducting the amount to cover certain items necessary to complete the building, and not provided for in the contract as awarded.

Proposals were accordingly received based upon the revised plans for the smaller building, and the low bid of \$44,492 was accepted on April 1, 1919. Subsequently a proposal was submitted by the contractor to make certain changes incidental to the construction of the additional story, in amount \$6,208, and it is understood that certain citizens agreed to pay the contractor the additional sum of \$5,656, the amount carried in this bill, in order to enable him to construct the additional story.

On June 24, 1919, the Treasury Department accepted the proposal for changes incidental to the work, and by means of this acceptance and the arrangement between the contractor and the citizens a two-story building was constructed at Decatur in accordance with the original plans, and it is now fully occupied by different branches of the Government service.

Attention is invited to H. R. 11791, authorizing an appropriation of \$150,000,000 for public-building construction throughout the country, on which a favorable report was submitted by your committee yesterday. Under the provisions of this bill, should it be enacted into law, the Secretary of the Treasury would have authority to award contracts for the construction of those buildings where authorizations have been previously made but were found to be insufficient, without regard to the limit of cost heretofore made. However, inasmuch as certain citizens of Decatur raised the additional amount required and the department was enabled to award contract for the construction of an adequate building, relief could not be afforded under H. R. 11791, and this legislation is necessary to reimburse these public-spirited citizens.

Your committee feels that this is a meritorious measure.

The report of the Secretary of the Treasury on H. R. 374 is as follows:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, February 23, 1924.

THE CHAIRMAN COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS,
House of Representatives.

SIR: Reference is made to your request of December 13, 1923, for a report on bill (H. R. 374) increasing the limit of cost for the public building and site at Decatur, Ala., to \$70,656, and authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to expend not exceeding \$5,656 of the amount in reimbursing those, or their legal representatives, who contributed toward the cost of constructing said building of two stories, as first planned.

Bills to accomplish the purpose contemplated by the present bill were introduced in the Sixty-sixth and Sixty-seventh Congresses and reported on by this department. Copies of these reports, setting forth the facts in connection with the construction of the building, are inclosed. The building is completed and occupied, final settlement of the contract having been made on June 20, 1922.

It is the understanding of this department that the necessary amount to enable the contractor to construct the post-office building at Decatur of two stories as originally planned was contributed by certain citizens of the town, as explained in report of September 4, 1919, but no assurance was given by the department that they would be reimbursed by the Government, and the question of whether they shall be reimbursed is one for Congress to determine.

Respectfully,

A. W. MELLON, *Secretary of the Treasury.*

